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Wither the Audience for Classical Music?

by

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Editor's Digest

Wither the Audience for Classical Music?

The witty essay that follows had its genesis in an address that author Douglas Dempster delivered at the American Center in Tokyo in August 2000. While conceding that assessing the vitality of classical music is a complicated question, Dempster posits that classical musical activity in the U.S. is greater today than it was 20 years ago.

Prophets of Doom

Dempster opens his essay with a review of what critics have had to say in recent years about the declining condition of classical music in the U.S. He then begins to turn those assessments inside out. Using data from a series of government reports, the author guides readers toward the conclusion that while growth for live-concert classical music may have been modest over the last 20 years, there has been no decline.

He next turns his attention to the demographics of the classical music audience, suggesting that although the audience actually present in the concert hall may be aging, the overall audience for classical music is not. This leads to the conclusion that the overall audience for classical music is actually growing.

The Influence of Electronics

After reviewing statistics from the Recording Industry Association of America, Dempster points out that in a recorded-music market that has grown nearly 100 percent in 10 years, classical music sales have held their own, increasing from \$237 million in 1989 to \$453 million in 1998. He hazards a guess that the audience for classical music will also quickly embrace the emerging Internet-based sales and distribution of classical recordings. "Wither the Audience for Classical Music?" Doug Dempster says no.

Wither the Audience for Classical Music?

In recent years, the “death” of classical music—or at very least, its terminal illness—has seemed a foregone conclusion among America’s music critics.

For many, the question was not whether classical music was dying so much as what, or who, had killed it. A common sentiment among critics, and the impression left on their readers, was that a lively golden age, when classical music was still a popular art form, had passed away. Orchestras and chamber groups, audiences, schools, publishers, and recording businesses stagger along, driven by little more than cultural inertia, slowly withering away in favor of more lively, popular arts of our day.

I’m going to argue that nothing can be further from the truth. Contrary to what we hear from many critics, classical music activity in the U.S. is certainly greater today, by any tangible measure, than it was 20 years ago.

Before pressing my case, I also want to be quick to warn that the vitality of classical music is a large and complicated question. How are we to judge the health of something so vast, so culturally slippery, as “classical music”? One thing is for sure, the occasional grim anecdote, a critic’s wistful remembrances of better times past, even an ominous statistic or two tell us too little about a very large beast. Like the proverbial blind man trying to decide on the shape of an elephant from the roughness of its skin, we need to take a broader and less subjective perspective on the state of classical music.

A thorough study would give attention to the current state of the symphony orchestra as well as chamber music, to the state of music education and recreational musicianship, to the music publishing business, to training programs and employment opportunities for professional musicians and composers, and other relevant, tangible measures of the culture and marketplace for classical music. I’m going to focus in this essay on only one, albeit very important, part of that large issue: how robust is the audience for classical music in the U.S.? My

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claim is that the audience for classical music, far from withering away, is growing. However, I try to point out that it is growing in ways that are nontraditional, heavily influenced by technological, social, and demographic factors, and shaped by economic forces that may not preserve traditional institutions and conventions of the classical music world. Where the news is bad for classical music, I argue, the causes are rarely unique to or singularly significant for classical music; all culture is influenced by these forces and classical music is not immune.

The Critics: Prophets of Doom

Let me give a taste of what critics have been saying in recent years about the state of classical music in the U.S. In the politically conservative *New Criterion*, the late editor and music critic Samuel Lipman extolled the importance of classical music to “our” culture and witnessed its decline in morbid horror:

The classical music that we have celebrated has been for us the culmination of our civilization. Unrenewed, properly honored only in private, forced to justify itself to every demagogic politician, editorial-page writer, corporate mogul, and foundation executive, classical music now stands, for the first time in the modern world, on the periphery of culture . . . classical music today is in deep trouble. It is not clear whether we can do more than bear witness.¹

Norman LeBrecht, music critic for the *London Daily Telegraph*, published in 1996 his lurid account of the classical music business, *Who Killed Classical Music?: Maestros, Managers, and Classical Music*.² As music critics and journalists, Lipman and LeBrecht couldn’t be more different. Lipman was every bit the cranky conservative. LeBrecht, by contrast, is a gossipy tabloid journalist who is fascinated by the personal and professional depravities of the maestros and managers who “killed” classical music. But they certainly agree on the crisis in classical music. LeBrecht wrote:

Ticket sales have tumbled, record revenue has shriveled, major players have lost their independence, state and business funds have dried up and artists who might formerly have looked forward to an independent solo career have gone begging for wage packets in the ranks of orchestras, themselves threatened with extinction. . . . The future of musical performance hangs in the balance at the close of the twentieth century.³

It’s not just the journalists who have foreseen the end. Pulitzer Prize-winning composer William Bolcomb wrote a widely cited article in a 1990 edition of *Musical America* titled “Trouble in the Music World” in which he spoke for many contemporary composers⁴ when he warned that:

We are, it seems, currently witnessing a crumbling of the façade of the serious music scene in the United States. Concert sales are generally down. . . . The serious music publishing industry is almost defunct . . .

sales of records and tapes are suffering . . . [and] it is nearly impossible to make a living exclusively as a serious composer.⁵

As if to underscore his forecast, *Musical America* went out of business only two years later, after 112 years of continuous publication!

Symphony orchestras, which make up so much of the total culture and market that is classical music in America, have come in for special attention from those who see in their problems the end of classical music. One writer in the *New York Times* succinctly summarized the problems and the despair in orchestras:

There is much unease today among those who head America's orchestras. Statistics show that audiences are aging, and the collapse of arts education in the public schools makes it difficult to find new listeners among a younger, more ethnically diverse urban population. The repertoire has grown stuffy and predictable, and daring ventures tend to alienate old, reliable subscribers. Finances are shaky in all the arts, but orchestras . . . are particularly vulnerable.⁶

Music critic Joseph Horowitz read into the troubles of orchestras the demise of the orchestral age:

[After World War I], America's orchestras turned hostile to American music, to contemporary art, to creativity itself The glamour of . . . the "Platinum Orchestra age" was guaranteed not to last. The celebrity conductors died off. The canonized repertoire grew old and overly familiar. . . . By the 1980s the complacency of the classical music establishment was stultifying—except to the administrators and music businessmen who preserved the status quo.⁷

Turn these prophets of doom on their heads. Judging by the popularity and economic success of classical music we live in something of a classical music golden age.⁸ Classical music is more widely heard and available, performed at a higher level of preparation and artistry, both in the U.S. and, I would wager, around the world, than it has ever been before. At very least, I'll insist on this: if classical music is in some kind of trouble, it is trouble that is simply not evident in tangible measures of its popularity and availability.

Is the Audience Withering?

If there is any one "fact" that most captures our fear that classical music is dying, it is the withering away of the audience for classical music. The general impression in the world of music is that the audience for classical music performances, recordings, radio and video programming, printed music, and literature about classical music is disappearing. The traditional lovers of classical music are aging, it is supposed. They're going to fewer concerts than before and buying fewer records than ever. Most worrisome of all, they're not being replaced by younger generations of listeners who, like the middle-aged baby boomers, have a juvenile fixation on rock-and-roll or other popular musics. The audience for classical music is literally dying off. Or so the argument goes.

But where is the evidence to support this bleak prognosis? A careful look suggests that the truth is not so simple and not nearly so discouraging. While orchestras have struggled to fill concert halls during long concert seasons, the audience attendance at classical music concerts of all kinds has increased steadily over the last 20 years. The National Endowment for the Arts has sponsored several Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPAs), in 1982, 1985, 1992, and 1997. Some of the raw, noncomparative statistics from these studies make it difficult to believe that the fine and performing arts in the U.S. are in any kind of trouble. In the 1997 SPPA, 50 percent of all Americans surveyed indicated some audience participation in classical music, jazz, opera, musical theater, plays, ballets, or art museums. (In these studies, “audience participation” is defined as “attendance at a live performance at least once in the past 12 months.”) This was up from 41 percent in the 1992 survey.⁹

Of those surveyed in 1997, 15.6 percent indicated that they had attended some classical music concert over the last year, with an average number of 3 concerts attended by each.¹⁰ That’s an audience for classical music concerts of nearly 90 million concert tickets a year, and this does not include opera, ballet, or jazz.

These concert figures are dwarfed by the numbers of Americans who listen to classical music through various electronic media. The 1997 SPPA indicates that 41 percent of Americans listen to classical music at least once each year on radio. Of Americans surveyed, 34 percent indicated that they have listened to classical music at least once a year on recordings.

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Of course, these numbers don’t tell us how serious or avid these listeners may be. They don’t tell us whether they’re listening to outdated recordings of Pachelbel’s *Canon* or the latest recordings of premiere performances by living composers. The numbers don’t tell us whether radio listeners are using classical music as background music or whether they’re actively listening. But the sheer scale of the participation suggests that classical music is at least a casual interest for nearly half of all Americans. And if that’s true, then there must be a smaller but still very significant percentage for whom it is a serious enthusiasm.

An Economic Analysis

Astonishingly, by some measures, classical music and other performing arts are seeing healthier market growth than are the motion picture and spectator sports industries. A recent report from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA, a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce) shows that consumers spent \$9.4 billion on admissions to all performing arts events in 1998. In the same year, consumers spent \$6.8 billion on movies and \$7.6 billion attending spectator sports events.¹¹ Spending on performing arts events, including classical music, increased by 16 percent between 1993 and 1998, in real, inflation-adjusted

dollars. Total spending on movie attendance and spectator sports increased during the same period at somewhat slower rates.¹² The same study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that during the same period, consumers were willing to spend more, on average, on the performing arts events they attended than they spent on movies and sporting events.

These studies tell us something about where the performing arts fit in the spending habits of Americans. Admittedly, it's not all good news for the arts. Between 1993 and 1998, the average American spent a smaller percentage of his or her total recreation or entertainment dollars on the performing arts. In 1993, American consumers spent just 2 percent of their discretionary income on the performing arts. By 1998, that had fallen to 1.68 percent.¹³ But this has to be put in context. Other traditional categories of "recreational spending," including movies, spectator sports, books, gardening materials, magazines, sheet music, etc., all saw declines in their share of the consumer's recreational spending. Over the same six-year period, consumer spending on computer hardware and software increased by more than 600 percent.¹⁴ Add to this observation the fact that this was a period of great prosperity in America, and it's clear that total consumer spending on the performing arts has very likely increased dramatically during this period. In context, one has to conclude that as a traditional form of recreational activity, the performing arts have remained a persistent choice for Americans enjoying great prosperity and ever-increasing options for their recreational spending.

These studies don't distinguish classical music among the performing arts. While the performing arts in America would seem to be economically healthy, classical music may not be enjoying its share of that health. Is the audience for classical music shrinking in size in the U.S.?

Here again, studies and statistics make it hard to find even a modest decline in the size of audiences for classical music. The SPPA surveys clearly show that between 1982 and 1997, the size of the audience for live-performance classical music has held steady and more recently even grown, as a percentage of the total population. In 1982, 12.5 percent of Americans surveyed indicated that they had attended at least one classical music concert over the last 12 months.¹⁵ By 1997, the percentage had increased to 15.6 percent of all Americans. With an increasing population, these modest percentage increases mean significant increases in the overall size of the audience for classical music in the U.S. The adult population of the U.S. grew by approximately 15 percent over this 15-year period.¹⁶ Consequently, concert attendance for classical music concerts didn't shrink at all, but actually grew by approximately 3.5 million.

Symphony orchestras, as one part of the classical music world, got a scare in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and since then have seen some encouraging trends. American orchestras have seen total concert attendance increase nearly 19 percent over the period from 1990 to 1998; that's 5 million more seats filled each year for concerts than 8 years earlier. During the same period, income to orchestras from the sale of concert tickets increased by 37 percent.¹⁷ Taken

together, these facts indicate that the audience for orchestra concerts is growing both in real numbers and as a percentage of the U.S. adult population. Increased ticket revenues can only mean either that there are more people attending each concert than ever, or that they are paying more, in real dollars, than they have before. The truth is likely to be a combination: more people attending the average concert at a higher average cost per ticket—very good news indeed for orchestras.

Many orchestras struggled to retain season or series subscriptions during the 1980s and 1990s. Concerts are, much more than in the past, filled by occasional ticket buyers rather than subscribers. This is both bad and good news for orchestras. It is harder to market and distribute concert sales to many more occasional listeners than to a smaller number of available series subscribers. But it also indicates that audiences are becoming broader and perhaps more diverse in their interests.¹⁸ That's good news for the culture of orchestral music in the U.S.

The growth of the audience for live-concert classical music has been modest over a nearly 20-year period, and it certainly hasn't declined. On the other hand, the size of the audience for classical music heard through electronic media has grown at a stunning rate over the same period. Between 1982 and 1997, the percentage of Americans who reported listening to classical music on the radio increased from 18 percent to 41 percent of the adult population, an increase of approximately 50 million listeners.¹⁹ Similar trends are evident in the use of recorded media for listening to classical music. By these measures, the last 20 years have seen huge growth for the classical music audience through electronic media.

The Aging Audience

But surely the audience for classical music is aging, isn't it? I've heard some version of this story dozens of times from worried musicians, concert producers, critics, and orchestra administrators: "When I was a boy, young musicians would sneak into concerts to hear the great orchestras, conductors, and soloists of the day; now when I go to the symphony, I see nothing but gray heads; I'm middle-aged and I'm often the youngest person at the concert!" The suggestion is that "in the old days," audiences for classical music were young, vibrant, and growing, but that today they're aging and withering. What do studies show about the aging of the audience for classical music?

In an influential study of concert attendance and other forms of arts participation published in 1996, a group of researchers concluded that the baby-boom generation²⁰ is not participating in classical music and the arts generally at a level that would be predicted based on the participation rate of earlier generations.²¹ What this group found when they looked at the arts activities of different age groups in the U.S. was that educational achievement and income were the two strongest predictors of a person's involvement with the arts. For Americans born between 1946 and 1965, attendance at classical music performances was significantly lower than for older generations, even when

factors of educational achievement and income were controlled.²² Also, participation rates fell off significantly as generations of Americans got younger: 17- to 26-year-olds attended classical music concerts much less frequently than did 37- to 46-year-old baby boomers. And finally, this analysis also seemed to indicate that younger generations did not increase the frequency with which they attended classical music concerts as they aged over the period from 1982 to 1992.²³

The worry in these statistics is that the different participation rates in classical music concerts among younger-generation Americans reflects a declining interest in classical music and perhaps an even more fundamental cultural evolution

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away from classical music as we’ve come to know it. Some commentators have wondered and even celebrated the possibility that for many baby boomers, “classical music” has come to mean the music of Elvis, the Beatles, and Jimi Hendrix. Is it possible that as Americans age, Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms will be displaced by Berry, the Beatles, and “the Boss”?

A careful review of this research suggests a less startling conclusion. It is true that younger generations of Americans, especially the baby boomers, are not attending classical music concerts with the frequency of older generations. However,

every generation considered in this study increased very significantly its listening to classical music through radio and recorded media over the 10-year period between 1982 and 1992. Americans born between 1916 and 1945 listened to classical music on the radio with greater frequency than younger generations. But growth in radio-listening habits was the very greatest in the baby-boom generation.²⁴

As the entire American audience for classical music was shifting toward radio, at the expense of concert attendance, baby boomers, more than any other demographic group, were shifting their attention to recorded media: the LP record, the cassette tape, and the CD. Between 1982 and 1992, listening to classical music on recorded media increased for every age group of Americans.²⁵ But it increased the most, during that period, for the baby-boom generation.

These complicated statistics tell us several things. First—and this should be no surprise—classical music consumption is heavily influenced by electronic technologies and media. Audiences have shifted, and will very likely continue to shift, their discretionary time and dollars toward new technologies for listening to classical music. Second and contrary to the critics, younger generations of Americans do seem to be “growing into” a more mature interest in classical music, but they will probably, much more so than their parents, satisfy that interest outside the concert hall. The audience in the symphony concert hall may be aging, in relative terms, but the overall audience for classical music is

not.²⁶ Third, the trends revealed by these demographic data have no special relevance to classical music; very similar trends can be found affecting a wide variety of other art forms and entertainments.

The Future of the Recording Business

But surely the news from the classical recording business indicates that classical music is in serious trouble, does it not? The classical music world has been rocked recently by the news that BMG Classics (a division of BMG Entertainment, which is itself a division of the German media conglomerate Bertelsmann) will consolidate and reduce its classical music releases, or so it has been rumored, from 200 to as few as 10 per year. The recording industry is dominated by a small number of large multimedia corporations which find it increasingly difficult to justify classical recording projects that often take years to repay production, marketing, and distribution costs. In the U.S., it costs approximately \$200,000 to produce an orchestral CD that may sell, if it is successful, only several thousand copies worldwide and over the life of distribution.²⁷ It's no surprise then that fewer and fewer orchestras can interest major labels in taking the risk of orchestral recordings.

However, the bad news coming from the major recording companies does not tell an accurate story about the general health of the marketplace for classical music recordings. According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), in 1999, the total value of recorded music distributed in the U.S., on all media, grew by a very healthy 6.3 percent, from a \$13.7 billion market in 1998 to a \$14.5 billion market in 1999.²⁸ The American market for recorded music has shown phenomenal growth over the nine years between 1990 and 1999, approximately doubling in size over that period, when measured by the dollar value of all the recordings shipped to merchants by recording companies.²⁹

How have classical music recordings done by comparison with other styles of music? Judging from the popular press, one would expect that the market for classical music recordings has declined enormously. That's simply not true. In 1989, classical music recording sales made up 3.6 percent of the total market for records.³⁰ In 1998, classical music record sales made up 3.3 percent of the market. That's not quite a 10 percent decline in market share, but this is well within year-to-year fluctuations of the market for classical music recordings. It is important to remember that in a market that has grown by nearly 100 percent over 10 years, this 3.3 percent market share translates into a vast increase in

“The recording industry is dominated by a small number of large multimedia corporations which find it increasingly difficult to justify classical recording projects that often take years to repay production, marketing, and distribution costs.”

total quantity and value of classical recordings in the marketplace. The classical-recording market in the U.S., according to RIAA statistics, was a \$237 million market in 1989. With a slightly lower market share in 1998, that market for classical music recordings has nearly doubled to \$453 million.

Having only 3.3 percent of the U.S. recording market, one might argue, is nothing to brag about. Even if there had been no decline in market share, some would see a crisis in the mere fact that classical music holds such a small share of the musical interest of Americans. But this has to be put in context. If market share is any measure of cultural health, the real crisis in American musical culture is in rock-and-roll, which sank from a 41.7 percent share of the market in 1989 to 25.7 percent in 1998. That's what I call a sustained and precipitous decline. Jazz has lost half its market share, sinking in 10 years from 4.9 percent of the market to a tiny 1.9 percent. Pop and "new age" have lost one-third to one-half of their market shares over this period. Country music has approximately doubled in its share of the music marketplace, but still controls only 14 percent of the market. If there is any very clear trend in the sale of recordings in the U.S., it is a trend toward musical tastes becoming more fragmented and more eclectic. The marketplace for music recordings is now less dominated by any one musical style.

In a cultural marketplace of this kind, the remarkable fact is that the audience for classical music has grown along with the general growth of the recording industry.

Whither the Audience?

I haven't offered anything approximating an exhaustive survey of the known data on the classical music audience. But the studies reviewed here make it perfectly clear that critics have, perhaps in a spate of millennial fever, greatly exaggerated the demise of classical music at the end of the 20th century. Even worse, however, they have witnessed very complex trends in the culture of classical music and reduced them to the morally simplistic calculus of "rise" and "decline." Musical and cultural critics misinterpret economic, demographic, and technological changes affecting the world of classical music as signaling some spiritual decay in the culture of classical music itself. The audience for classical music is not withering, but technological, sociological, and economic forces are reshaping that audience in important ways.

To illustrate: it's true that professional orchestras have struggled financially as they have reached various limits on audience size, cost-cutting, fundraising, and expansion of programs. However, at the same time that orchestras have struggled financially, chamber music is enjoying enormous growth in the U.S.³¹ While it's not the whole story, the mobility and cost-effectiveness of chamber-music groups surely contribute very significantly to the comparative economic success of chamber music. The struggles of symphony orchestras are reported everywhere in the press, but one hears little about the growth of chamber music.

Consider another example. For-profit, commercial radio stations that broadcast classical music are now virtually nonexistent in the U.S. Only a handful of such stations still exist in only the very largest radio markets. They've gone the way of the old radio orchestras. The radio frequencies controlled by these stations have proved far more profitable as commercial rock, country, or pop music stations, which reach much larger audiences. Over the last 30 years, however, not-for-profit radio, which has a dedicated segment of the FM band, has grown enormously. Local public radio stations can be found throughout the U.S. and many of these provide classical music programming.

It is also true, of course, that major recording companies have begun to diminish their investment in the small market for classical music. This is a reflection of the generally more competitive nature of that industry than it is any intimation of the mortality of the classical tradition. Classical music recording projects, which were even in the best of times not very profitable, are harder than ever for recording companies to rationalize in the face of increasing competition and increased corporate accountability to shareholders. However, as the largest recording companies have reduced their stake in the classical music market, dozens of small companies have emerged to produce classical music recordings for small markets.

Internet-based digital technologies are revolutionizing once again the marketing and distribution of music. The clear trend in the recording industry is toward Web-based distribution of recordings, often directly marketed from the artist or record company to consumers. The licensing agreement between MP3.com and several of the major record companies that had sued MP3.com for copyright infringement is a startling indication of just how swift this change in the music industry may be.³² Early indications suggest that the audience for classical music, tending to be well educated, prosperous, and technologically savvy, will move quickly to embrace Internet-based sales, and even distribution, of recordings. There is at least the prospect that Web-based music distribution may stimulate the music industry, and especially classical music, as profoundly as did CD technology. For one example of this, the American Federation of Musicians has recently ratified a precedent-setting "Internet Agreement" that gives individual orchestras and their musicians much greater autonomy in negotiating agreements about Internet-based distribution of recordings than did past electronic media agreements.

"Internet-based digital technologies are revolutionizing once again the marketing and distribution of music."

For a second, more poignant illustration, consider that *Musical America*, the music magazine that had been published for 112 continuous years until 1992—the year in which William Bolcomb predicted the "crumbling of the façade of the serious music scene"—has now been successfully rejuvenated on the World Wide Web.

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Notes

- ¹ Lipman, Samuel. 1992. *Music and More: Essays, 1975-1991*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, p. 25. First published in *New Criterion*, 1991.
- ² LeBrecht, Norman. 1997. *Who Killed Classical Music?: Maestros, Managers, and Classical Music*. Secaucus, NJ: Birch Lane Press.
- ³ LeBrecht, pp. 5 and 12.
- ⁴ Music critic and composer John Warthen Struble, wrote that “[w]e may acknowledge that the symphony, opera, ballet, and chamber music have ceased to speak to our culture in any vital way.” Struble, J.W. 1991. *Musical America* 111 (7): 26-27.
- ⁵ Bolcomb, William. 1990. *Musical America* 110 (3): 20.
- ⁶ Schwarz, K. Robert. 1993. The Crises of Tomorrow are Here Today. *New York Times*, October 31, “Arts and Leisure”: 31-32.
- ⁷ Horowitz, Joseph. 1995. *The Post-Classical Predicament: Essays on Music and Society*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, pp.#198-199.
- ⁸ For the purpose of this essay, I assume, uncritically and unwisely, that the term “classical music” is meaningful in some ahistorical, timeless sense that allows us to refer sensibly to this body of music or the culture that supports it across historical periods. That raises an important question that begs, on another occasion, to be answered.
- ⁹ National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Research Division. June 1998. Note #70. (See < <http://arts.endow.gov/pub/> > .)
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ NEA Research Division. March 2000. Note #75. (See < <http://arts.endow.gov/pub/> > .)
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid, p. 3.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, p. 3.
- ¹⁵ NEA Research Division. October 25, 1993. Note #50. Public Participation in the Arts: 1982 and 1992, p. 3.
- ¹⁶ 170.6 million U.S. adults in 1982 to 195.6 million in 1997.

- ¹⁷ See American Symphony Orchestra League Web site: < http://www.symphony.org/frames/fs_news.htm > .
- ¹⁸ I owe this nice observation to Paul Judy.
- ¹⁹ See National Endowment for the Arts Research Division. June 1998. Note #70. 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts: Half of U.S. Adults Attended Arts Performances or Exhibitions, Table 3, p.7; and NEA Research Division. October 25, 1993. Note #50. Public Participation in the Arts: 1982 and 1992, Table 2, p. 9.
- ²⁰ In the year 2000, this group included Americans aged 35 to 55, making up more than half the adult population of the U.S.
- ²¹ Peterson, Richard A., Darren E. Sherkat, Judith Huggins Balfe, and Rolf Meyersohn. 1996. Age and Arts Participation, with a Focus on the Baby Boom Cohort. NEA Research Division Report #34. Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press.
- ²² Ibid, pp. 16-19.
- ²³ Ibid, pp. 24-28.
- ²⁴ Ibid, p. 59.
- ²⁵ Ibid, p. 63.
- ²⁶ The baby boomers, as a generation, have tended to have children later in life and have tended to be two-career families. The Peterson et al. study also points out that these trends may explain the lower participation rates among baby boomers in classical music concerts. Add to this the facts that America has, during the post-World War II period, become “suburbanized” and that the real-dollar cost of attending live performances has gone up significantly over a 30-year period. Taken together with the vast improvements in audio technology over 30 years, there should be little surprise that younger audiences are not getting their classical music through concert performances in urban centers at the same rate as their parents’ generation.
- ²⁷ Waleson, Heidi. 1997. CD, *Symphony*, January-February:, 46.
- ²⁸ See Recording Industry of America (RIAA) at: < <http://www.riaa.com/MD-US-2.cfm> > .
- ²⁹ Ibid. The number of “units” (e.g., CD, CD single, LP, Cassette, DVD, etc.) shipped in 1990 was 865.7 million. By 1999, that number had grown to nearly 1.2 billion, a 34 percent increase. This means that the cost to consumers of recordings has gone up as preferences have shifted from LP and cassette to CD and, now, DVD. So the growth in terms of records has not matched the growth in the market value. By the same token, these new media typically contain much more content than conventional LPs

and cassettes, greatly increasing the amount of music available to consumers on each record.

³⁰ See RIAA. 1998 Consumer Profile. At <<http://www.riaa.com>>.

³¹ Supportive data on chamber music activity is hard to come by. The only good data I've been able to find documenting growth in the chamber music culture in the U.S. is from the U.S. Census Bureau. The bureau did a census of service industries in 1982 and 1987 as part of a five-year Economic Census. Between 1982 and 1987, the number of "chamber music organizations" counted in these studies increased 2.5 times. Even as the number of groups was growing rapidly, average revenues for these groups increased (not adjusted for inflation) by 32 percent over that same five-year period. This indicates a huge increase in the total economic activity surrounding chamber music performance in the U.S. (The total number of chamber music organizations counted in these census studies was very small, e.g., 75 in 1987. The study is careful to point out that the census greatly understates the number of active chamber music groups. The census studies counted only groups with a significant tax identity which excluded all groups with annual revenues below \$25,000 and any group organizationally subsumed under a larger organization such as a university. Also, 27 percent of the "classical music organizations" considered in the 1987 study did not "self-designate" as one of the three categories: symphony orchestra, opera company, chamber music organization.) See National Endowment for the Arts Research Division Note #47, September 30, 1993.

³² As I complete this essay, a federal judge is considering a potentially fatal punitive damage award for copyright infringement against MP3.com.